

ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES

February 27, 2024

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order in the main meeting room at the Community Center on Tuesday, February 27, 2024, at 7:00pm.

Commission Members: Scott Walker, Phil Lasker, Shirley Canniff, Jen Rothenberg, Leslie Mayer, Josh Fenollosa and Sarah Carrier. Recreation Director Joe Connelly and ConCom representative Susan Chapnick were also present.

Anticipated Speakers: Amy Hortin, Klarysa Norton, Colleen McGrath and Indigo Blankenspoor – Relay for Life and Bark for Life

Members of the Public: Liz Reisberg

Preliminary Matter: Scott Walker, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance and welcomed anticipated speakers and members of the public to the Recreation Commission meeting.

Special Event Requests

North Union Field – Girl Scout Troop 64772

Troop 64772 has requested a special event permit to host an Easter Egg Hunt, spoon races and other games. The event will serve as a fundraiser to benefit the non-profit organization.

Ms. Mayer – Admission fees are not permitted for events held on public land/Open Space. She also noted that the request was submitted on the Town event application not the Recreation application. Mr. Connelly will advise the group that while fundraising is okay, they cannot charge an admission fee. The permit will be adjusted accordingly.

Ms. Canniff made a motion to approve the event, pending the stated conditions, seconded by Ms. Mayer. Approved 4-0 with Ms. Rothenberg not in attendance for the vote.

Menotomy Rocks Park - Redemption Hill Church

The event request was submitted by Arlington resident Tatyana Chernenko on behalf of a Medford non-profit church.

Mr. Connelly – Typically event requests are not permitted before April 1st, but Easter falls in March this year and we will support the event to be held earlier than traditionally allowed. He noted that the event will be taking place at the same time as the previous request at North Union field.

Ms. Mayer – Raised parking and safety concerns that have come up during other events held at MRP.

Shirley – Noted that if the weather was good the event would attract a larger crowd. She asked how the event would be advertised and if social media would be used.

Mr. Connelly – Will advise the group to secure a police detail and will recommend that the group limit the event to only their church community. The Commission discussed moving the event to another location such as McClenen Park because as it has better parking. Ms. Chernenko stated that she chose MRP because the hills and woods appealed to older children. She is concerned that McClenen is too flat and will not be as fun for the children. She also stated that social media would not be used to advertise the event. The number of attendees would be restricted and would be required to RSVP. Mr. Connelly stated that Hills Hill might be a preferred location because it does have a wooded area as well as better

parking and access to the rink bathrooms. Ms. Mayer and Ms. Rothenberg shared parking concerns and agreed that a police detail would be required based on previous experience with events held at MRP. The Commission agreed to support the event at Hills Hill. Ms. Rothenberg was not present for the vote , but requested the event application be amended, showing the location as Hills Hill rather than MRP.

Ms. Canniff motioned to approve the event, pending location, seconded by Mr. Lasker. Approved 4-0 with Ms. Rothenberg not in attendance for the vote.

Reservoir - Bark for Life and Hurd Field - Relay for Life

Mr. Connelly introduced the event coordinators and supporters. He noted that the event could not be hosted earlier in the spring due to the MIAA softball tournament.

Ms. Mayer – Inquired about the change in scheduling as the Bark for Life was previously held in the fall and the Relay for Life has traditionally been held in the spring. Ms. Hortin stated that Bark for Life was traditionally held in the spring but was held in the fall last year. She also stated that the event sponsor was not available in the fall. The Bark for Life, and other events, are held before the Relay for Life as a “feeder event” to generate interest in the Relay.

Ms. Canniff – Requested more information about other hosting towns/cities. Ms. Hortin advised that the event had been held in Arlington for 20 years after partnering with Arlington High School. She noted that the event hopes to move back to the AHS field/track once the construction project is complete. Ms. Hortin stated that the event was also held in Medford and Woburn but interest dwindled, unlike the strong support from Arlington participants. Ms. McGrath noted that the event was also strongly supported by Arlington High School students who wanted the event close to home.

Ms. Mayer –Inquired if the Bark for Life could be pushed out to next fall. Ms. Hortin noted the need for “feeder events” to generate interest before the Relay for Life. Ms. McGarth shared that different types of crowds attend each event but attract a variety of different people/groups.

Mr. Connelly – Inquired about the “canine vendors” identified on the event request application. Sales for profit are not permitted in Open Space. Ms. Hortin stated that vendors would be conducting “giveaways”. The only fundraising would be from hosting a bake sale at the event. Ms. Rothenberg noted that a bake sale would require the group to acquire a permit from the Board of Health.

Mr. Lasker – Asked if the group was willing to push the Bark for Life to the fall. Ms. Hortin stated that the sponsor could not be in attendance this evening but relayed a message of support. Ms. Hortin will have a conversation with the sponsor about her availability.

Ms. Mayer – Noted that the Rez is not open in May so there is no schedule conflict with the request. Ms. Rothenberg noted that the Rez would also be closed in September.

Ms. Mayer – Expressed concerns about hosting the Relay for Life on Hurd Field as it is one of the Commission’s newly completed projects. Mr. Connelly noted that the path could be used for walking the dogs and that field use would be pending weather and field conditions. Ms. Rothenberg requested that the group submit a rain date. She also questioned the number of attendees. While the application says 65, Ms. Hortin stated that it would likely be 100-150.

Ms. Canniff – Shared Ms. Mayer’s concerns about hosting an event on the newly renovated field. Mr. Connelly said that he would have a discussion with the group regarding the setup; no tents due to the underground irrigation system. The group could potentially use the parking lot and plaza area to set up tents if necessary.

Mr. Fenollosa – Inquired about the lengthy set up time (4 hours prior to the event). Ms. Hortin stated that the small committee needs the time to make the event fun by setting up balloons, banners and other decorations. Mr. Connelly inquired if lighting would be needed to which Ms. Hortin said yes.

Mr. Lasker made a motion to approve the Bark for Life, seconded by Ms. Mayer. Approved 4-1.

Mr. Lasker made a motion to approve the Relay for Life, seconded by Ms. Mayer. Approved 5-0.

Capital Project Updates –

Robbins Farm Construction

- Agreement with manufacturer on slide, waiting on shop drawing approval. Order will take 12-16 weeks.
- Following the order, the contractor will provide a new construction schedule. Completion date of 7/4 is no longer realistic.
- Handrails are needed on both sides of the stairs. Working on pricing, change order and funding options.
- Mr. Lasker expressed concern about the constant changes to the schedule and costs.
- Ms. Canniff and Ms. Rothenberg shared Mr. Lasker's concerns and requested that the contractor be invited to a future meeting or suggested that Mr. Connelly relay the Commission's concerns directly.
- Ms. Mayer inquired about the contingency. Mr. Connelly stated that the project was close to the contingency already "before breaking ground".
- Ms. Canniff requested that the Commission receive email updates as they occur.
- Mr. Fenollosa, Mr. Lasker and Mr. Walker discussed concerns about the manufacturer and the landscape architect. Mr. Lasker asked if Mr. Connelly could request a more affordable alternative. Mr. Connelly stated that the order had already been placed but he will inquire.

Hills Hill MTB

- The design team has a preliminary plan to review with the public at the second public meeting to be held on March 26.
- The design team will present to the Commission after making any design changes resulting from input from the public meeting.
- Upon approval of the Commission the design will be submitted to CPA for review. The CPA Chair, Clarissa Rowe, has requested a second, alternative plan to review.
- Ms. Rothenberg noted that the March 26 public meeting coincides with the biweekly Commission meeting. She recommended holding the public meeting prior to PRC at 6pm. Mr. Fenollosa questioned if limiting the public meeting to 1 hour would be realistic. Mr. Connelly believes the event will be well attended.

Parallel and Menotomy Designs

- A public meeting was held on February 8th went very well. The design team has met and is reviewing feedback.
- Copley Wolff is tweaking final plans and looking at equipment options. The final plans will be available for the Commission to review in early April.
- Both projects are on track for funding approval at the spring Town Meeting.

Rink Parking Lot Study

- Contract has been awarded to Stantec and is waiting to be signed.
- Design team held a meeting for preliminary discussion.
- Awaiting final contract signatures before taking further action.
- ADA Parking Lot/Bike Renovation is separate from the study process. Mr. Fenollosa asked what the survey includes. Mr. Connelly stated that the survey includes the area from the edge of Buck Field to Ryder Street lights, back to the bike path and up the hill toward Summer Street.
- Mr. Connelly advised that ADA funding would be lost if not ready by June.

Drake Village Connection

- NOI approved by ConCom.
- Requesting pricing from SUMCO prior to further action.
- Price will determine if the project moves forward. Mr. Connelly stated that there is some funding left over from the Rez project and some may be available through the Housing Authority.

Bench Donation Approval

Mr. Connelly received the request to install a bench near Rindge Park overlooking the Rez. The language on the application has been edited to meet plaque/bench donation standards. Mr. Parravano was very active in the visually impaired community. Mr. Connelly and Ms. Parravano discussed installing two plaques on the bench, one in writing and one in braille. The Commission discussed possible placement of the plaques. Mr. Walker commented that having two plaques provided a great learning opportunity. Ms. Carrier inquired about having the writing and braille on the same plaque, but Mr. Connelly noted that the plaque would be too big to fit on the slats.

Comments and Items for Future Meetings

- Capital Plan Review – Mr. Connelly shared the current Capital Plan with the Commission to be reviewed prior to discussing public outreach and early public input.
- Private Preschool Permitting Discussion – The Commission discussed permitting preschools for use of playgrounds. Mr. Connelly will be hosting a meeting with preschool directors, Ms. Rothenberg and Ms. Canniff will also be in attendance. Ms. Reisberg asked if there was a comprehensive list of programs with the number of attending children. Mr. Connelly referred her to the EEC website.
- Amphibian Restoration Project – Permission requested by Katja Kwaku, a student at UCONN. Mr. Connelly shared that the project has received approval from ConCom but is being presented to PRC because the suggested locations are park properties. Mr. Walker asked about the presentation to ConCom. Ms. Chapnick stated that the project is for research and does not involve changing the environment. The work is being conducted in a natural setting rather than a lab. Ms. Rothenberg questioned why Ms. Kwaku had requested to conduct her research at local ponds, being that she is not an Arlington resident. Ms. Chapnick said that Ms. Kwaku is conducting research in a variety of areas to conduct testing of water conditions, pH, etc. She noted that Arlington was a preferred location because it provides excellent natural water environments to conduct her research. She noted that ConCom supported the project because the organisms wouldn't be released into the environment at the conclusion of the study. Mr. Lasker noted that the request states that Ms. Kwaku plans to release the frogs into the ponds. Ms. Chapnick said that ConCom didn't approve the release. Mr. Fenollosa also questioned what would be done with the frogs after the research was completed. Ms. Rothenberg shared concern that ConCom approved the project without realizing that the specimens would be released. She requested that ConCom revisit the request. She also expressed concern about the specimen containers being tampered with by the public. Ms. Mayer suggested that Ms. Kwaku be invited to a future meeting to further explain her plan and goals.

Ms. Rothenberg expressed her ongoing concerns about hosting the Relay for Life at Hurd Field. She believes that the estimated attendance is significantly lower than the large numbers from previous years. Ms. Rothenberg requested that the event request be amended to show the estimated anticipated participants as 100-150.

Ms. Chapnick inquired about the status of the off-leash dogs request at MRP. Mr. Connelly said a statement was released stating the Commission is "not changing the policy at this time".

Mr. Lasker asked for an update on the Futsal Court request. Mr. Connelly stated that a request was made to expedite the project if full donations were secured. Mr. Connelly also addressed inquiries about naming rights and sponsorships. Ms. Mayer noted that naming rights may be under the jurisdiction of Town Meeting or BOS.

Correspondence Received

Mr. Connelly forwarded correspondence to the Commission from B. Anthony regarding Hills Hill, W. Evans about Hills/McClenen and several parents regarding preschool permitting.

Approval of Minutes – The minutes from February 13, 2024 were tabled.

New Business

- Artificial Turf Committee Update – Mr. Connelly shared that the subcommittee chairperson and Natasha Waden from the Board of Health are compiling the narratives into a consolidated report for review. Data collection is still being conducted. An additional speaker may be invited to present a future meeting. There is a placeholder for Town Meeting so the goal is to be ready by April for spring Town Meeting. Ms. Rothenberg questioned if there were any other warrant articles pertaining to PRC.
- Open Space Committee – Ms. Canniff, no updates from Open Space but Ms. Canniff did share PRC updates with Elizabeth Carr-Jones.

Public Comment – N/A

Ms. Canniff motioned to adjourn at 9:01pm, seconded by Mr. Lasker. Approved 5-0.

The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Deanna Stacchi.